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ABSTRACT

An evaluation of the fifth cycle of operation of the Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative had several purposes: (1) to identify the indicators of quality in workplace education; (2) to begin to design an evaluation system for each program; and (3) to assess the indicators of quality for workplace education programs against the national indicators of quality in adult education. Five programs in the state were included in the evaluation, which consisted of onsite, team-based evaluations of indicators of quality. Phases of the evaluation process were as follows: introduction, team meetings, follow-ups to meetings, drafting of an evaluation instrument, review of the evaluation process, and synthesis of results across the programs. Among the quality outcomes desired were improved productivity, improved product quality, a flexible work force, improved communication in English, improved employee involvement, and career growth. Methods of achieving quality outcomes were identified: recruiting participants, fostering self-esteem, interweaving program and organization goals, and identifying barriers to and incentives for employee participation. It was concluded that indicators of quality for workplace education programs should be reviewed with critical attention to the organizational context of these programs and that evaluation should be an ongoing, integrated function. Recommendations were made to implement the results of the study throughout the programs. (Contains 15 references.) (KC)

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Department of Education

Partnership in Practice:

Evaluating Quality in Workplace Education with Planning and Evaluation Teams

Executive Summary of the Report of the Cycle 5 Evaluation of the Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative

December 1992

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Prepared by Evaluation Research
for the Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative
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Introduction: The Evolution of the Planning and Evaluation Team as A Way to Evaluate Quality in Workplace Education Programs

In March of 1992, the Bureau of Adult Education in the Massachusetts Department of Education contracted with Evaluation Research, an independent consulting company, to conduct an evaluation of the fifth cycle of operation of the Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative (MWEI). The broad goal of the MWEI Cycle 5 evaluation was to build on the conclusions and recommendations of the Cycle 4 MWEI Evaluation by refining a self-evaluation process for workplace education programs which uses evaluation teams at each participating program site. More specific goals included:

(1) help evaluation teams to identify the "indicators of quality in workplace education" that are most applicable to their program. Indicators of quality include both program outcomes and program processes;

(2) begin to design an evaluation system in each program based on documenting and/or measuring these indicators of quality.and, when possible, to draft instruments, collect data, and evaluate programs according to these indicators;

(3) assess the indicators of quality for workplace education programs identified by all the participating programs against the national indicators of quality in adult education.

Participating Programs

The programs which participated in the MWEI Cycle 5 evaluation are:

- James River/Amarin, the Montachusett Opportunity Council, and the Montachusett Private Industry Council, Leominster, MA.
- Michael J. Neville Manor Nursing Home and the Adult Learning Center, Cambridge, MA.
- Nypro, Inc. and the Clinton Adult Learning Center, Clinton, MA.
- The Norton Company, Bonded Abrasives Division, and the Workplace Education Program, Center for Life-Long Learning, Quinsigamond Community College, Worcester, MA.
- International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (I.L.G.W.U.), the Asian American Civic Association, and Eleven Small Garment Shops in Boston, MA.

Brief History of the MWEI Evaluations

Since it began in 1985, the MWEI has had an unusually strong commitment to program evaluation and to using the information which the evaluations gathered to inform program development and public policy. This commitment to evaluation by the State partners translated into freedom for the evaluators to explore the evaluation strategies that would best suit the multi-level needs of the State and local partnerships.

• In Cycle 1 of the MWEI, the evaluators (Bruce Astrein, Laura Sperazi and Adria Steinberg) conducted intensive two-day site visits with all the players involved with the six programs that composed the first program cohort.

• In Cycle 2, the evaluators (Laura Sperazi and Bruce Astrein) continued to conduct intensive site visits with the programs in the second cohort -- now increased to a total number of seventeen.

• In Cycle 3, the evaluators (Laura Sperazi and Paula Rayman) turned their attention from documenting effective principles and practices to documenting and measuring program outcomes.

• In Cycle 4, the evaluators (Laura Sperazi and Paul Jurmo) worked with evaluation teams at each site to (1) identify the outcomes which the teams wanted their programs to achieve; (2) design data-gathering instruments and processes to document and/or measure the achievement of those outcomes over time; (3) analyze the data which was collected; and (4) report the information to appropriate audiences.

• In Cycle 5, the evaluator (Laura Sperazi) extended the team-based outcome evaluation model to include concepts of both quality program outcomes and program processes.

II. The Planning and Evaluation Team Method: Seven Phases in Cycle 5

Background and Purpose

The evaluation of Cycle 5 of the MWEI consisted of on-site, team-based evaluations of "indicators of quality" in five workplace education programs funded through the U.S. Department of Education, National Workplace Literacy Program. The members of the evaluation teams represented the spectrum of the workplace education partnership -- program participants, supervisors, unions, managers, and educators. First the evaluator helped each team to define what quality looks like in their program -- both quality outcomes (what a program wants to achieve in the long run) and quality processes (what a program must have in place in order to achieve its quality outcomes.) Then the evaluator helped each team to think about customizing an evaluation system that would document and/or measure over time whether and how the program is achieving those quality outcomes and processes.

The long term goal of this team-based evaluation method is to make evaluation as integral a part of program operations as curriculum development, recruitment, or any other essential program component. Team members know what quality looks like in their programs. They know the signs of doing something right -- or not. They can use what they know to develop the criteria against which they evaluate themselves. And they can use the information they gather through their customized evaluation system to continuously improve their program operations.

The team-based evaluation process frequently refers to the "planning and evaluation spiral" to emphasize the feedback relationship between

evaluation and strategic planning. This focus on evaluation being put to practical use encourages the teams to take their work seriously. It means that they will see the results of their work in an improved program. This process is continuous, spiralling upward in a continuously integrated learning pattern. This process mirrors the processes of total quality management. It is continuous improvement in practice.

Not surprisingly, evaluation teams in Cycle 5 started in different places, had different issues and resources to work with, and accomplished different types and degrees of work. All the teams identified what quality outcomes they wanted their programs to achieve and what their programs must have in place in order to achieve those outcomes. Some teams were able to move very quickly into developing an evaluation system with draft instruments to collect data on whether and how the program is achieving those outcomes. Other teams moved more slowly, having to grapple more intensively with program process issues like the mechanics of collaboration between education and management.

Phases of the Evaluation Process

Phase 1: Introduce the Cycle 5 Evaluation to Education Staff from Participating Programs (March, 1992; one two-and-a-half hour meeting)

In a meeting convened for the purpose of introducing the Cycle 5 evaluation to the education staff from participating programs, the evaluation facilitator described the history of the MWEI evaluations Cycles 1 through 4; summarized the goals and phases of the Cycle 5 evaluation; presented a time-line for work to be completed; and was available to answer questions.

Phase 2: Convene the First Team Meeting. (May - September, 1992; two hours or more.

In the first team meeting, the facilitator replicated on a smaller scale for the full evaluation teams the presentation made to the education providers in their introductory meeting about the goals, history and time-line of the Cycle 5 evaluation. In this meeting, the evaluation teams accomplished the tasks listed below.

- **Presentation and discussion of the philosophy of the MWEI on evaluation.**
- **Presentation and discussion of the history of the MWEI evaluations.**
- **Review and discussion of the evaluation's focus on quality.**
- **Review and discussion of the evaluation's focus on the planning and evaluation spiral, and how it is consistent with the continuous improvement model.**

- **Facilitation of a mini-workshop where team members define quality outcomes and processes.**
  The facilitator asks series of questions related to identifying quality outcomes and processes. The facilitator asks two basic questions related to identifying quality outcomes and processes. These questions are:
  -- What do you want your program to achieve -- what are its desired long and short-term "quality outcomes?"
  -- What quality processes must your program have in place in order to achieve its quality outcomes?
- **Review and discussion of the quality outcomes and processes which the team identified, and preparation for data collection: How can the team document and/or measure whether and how the program is achieving these quality outcomes and implementing these quality processes?**

- **Identification of the next steps which the team needs to take in order to advance its evaluation.**

- **The facilitator records all discussion.**

Phase 3: Follow-up to the First Team Meeting (May - September, 1992)

The facilitator follows-up the first team meeting in three ways:

- **Summarize the work the team accomplished in its first meeting, and report it back to team members.**

- **Identify materials related to conducting a team based evaluation with a focus on quality and forward them to team members with the first follow-up memo.** These materials include:
  -- The Malcolm Baldrige National Award Guidelines.
  -- Workplace Education in Context: A Chart Comparing Traditional and High Performance Work Organizations.

- **Distribute other evaluation-related materials and make follow-up telephone calls as necessary.**

Phase 4: Convene the Second Team Meeting. (June - September, 1992; two hours or more)

In the second team meeting, the facilitator reviews the work accomplished in the first team meeting and moves the team to the point of drafting an evaluation instrument that would serve as the first piece of an evaluation system.

- **Review the main issues which emerged in the first team meeting.**
- **Review and prioritize quality outcomes and processes identified in first team meeting.**

- **Presentation of essential components of an evaluation system**
  -- how to best document/measure the team's high priority outcomes and processes: interview, survey, checklist, observation, simulation, or other means.
  -- whether already existing data in the organization can be used to document and/or measure them
  -- the process for drafting the instrument(s)
  -- the process for finalizing the draft instrument(s)
  -- assigning responsibility for piloting the instrument(s)
  -- assigning responsibility for collecting the data
  -- assigning responsibility for analyzing the data
  -- assigning responsibility for reporting the data

- **Draft an evaluation instrument** Team members design a first draft of an evaluation instrument which will serve as the starting point of the evaluation.

- **Introduce a data-base program called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) with team members in programs where the number of participants, and the amount of data to be collected, makes this an efficient option.** (Ten minutes)

Phase 5: Follow-up to the Second Team Meeting (June - September, 1992)

The facilitator follows-up the second team meeting in three ways:

- **Summarize the work the team accomplished in its second meeting, and report it back to team members.**

- **Draft or review drafts of evaluation instruments.**

- **Conduct a third team meeting as needed.**

Phase 6: Teams Meet Together to Review the Evaluation Process and Share Information

In late August, after four of the five teams had completed their meetings with the evaluation facilitator, team members from all participating programs convened for an information sharing meeting. Two important results of the meeting were:

(1) Networking among company managers.
(2) The presence of program participants from two teams reinforced everyone's understanding of how important it is to have program participants deeply involved in the evaluation process.

Phase 7: The Evaluator Synthesizes Data on Quality Outcomes and Processes across Programs

The synthesis is reported in Section III, below.

III. Quality Outcomes and Quality Process: What Teams Want Their Programs to Achieve, and How to Get There -- Local and National Perspectives

As stated in the introduction to this report, one of the goals of the Cycle 5 MWEI evaluation is to assess the outcomes and program processes that teams identify as indicators of quality in workplace education across the participating programs. The team-based method of evaluation which is described in this report first and foremost respects the need for each program partnership to identify quality outcomes and processes in terms that pertain specifically to it. However, at the same time, it is important to look at these definitions across programs for similarities and differences that will help the field in general to understand what quality in workplace education looks like.

The data are useful for at least two reasons. First, because of what they suggest national indicators of quality in workplace education should include that are different from the generic indicators established for the adult education field. Second, because of how they may be used in or adapted for evaluation team meetings as resource materials when team members are beginning the process of identifying quality goals and processes.

Chart #1 synthesizes what the teams identified as their desired outcomes. Chart #2 summarizes what programs must have in place in order to achieve quality outcomes. These are indicators of quality in program process. The format is the same as for Chart #1.

Chart #1
Outcomes: What Teams Want Their Programs to Achieve

- Improved Productivity {5}*
- Improved Product Quality {4}
- Flexible Workforce {4}
- Improved Communication in English {4}
- Improved Employee Involvement {4}
- Continued Education and Training {4}
- Career Growth {4}
- Improved Awareness and Appreciation of Cultural Differences {3}
- Containing Supervisors' Responsibilities {3}
- Accurate Documentation of Work on Appropriate Forms {3}
- Improved Safety {3}

Improved Math Skills {2}

- Improved Quality of Life {2}
- Reduced scrap {2}
- Improved scrap management {1}

* Number of teams who identified this quality outcome.

Chart # 2
Program Process: How to Achieve Quality Outcomes

- Identify and Recruit Program Participants {5}*
- Foster Self Esteem {5}.
- Interweave Program Goals with the Goals of the Organization {4}
- Build and Maintain High Quality in the Business/Education Partnership {4}
- Identify Barriers to and Incentives for Employee Participation {4}
- Identify Specific Vocabulary for ESL Instruction {4}
- Retain Employees in the Education Program {2}
- Other Process Indicators of Quality
  -- Build community: I.L.G.W.U.
  -- Resolve issues of coverage during class hours: Neville Manor
  -- Re-enroll dropouts: Neville Manor
  -- Positive feedback from the students: Neville Manor
  -- Have a permanent setting for classes: Neville Manor

* Number of teams who identified this quality process.

Local Indicators of Quality in the National Context

In "Model Indicators of Program Quality for Adult Education Programs," the July 1992 publication of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, eight model indicators for the field of adult education are listed. It is significant to note that, while the programs which participated in this evaluation comply with these eight model indicators of quality, evaluation teams identified only three of the eight indicators as priority indicators for their programs. The three indicators are:

- #2 Learners advance in the instructional program or complete program educational requirements that allow them to continue their education or training.
- Evaluation teams in four programs cited "Continued Education and Training" as an indicator of quality in workplace education.

• #7. Program successfully recruits the population in the community identified in the Adult education Act as needing literacy services.

• Evaluation teams in five programs cited "Identify and Recruit Program Participants"

• #8. Students remain in the program long enough to meet their educational needs

• Evaluation teams in two cited "Retention of Employees in the Education Program"

In his article "Evaluating National Workplace Literacy Programs," Thomas Sticht states that the evaluation of programs funded through the National Workplace Literacy Program should be seen in the context of the goals of that program: "The ultimate goal of the National Workplace Literacy Program is to improve the productivity of the workforce through the improvement of workers' literacy abilities. For this reason, after providing convincing evidence that improvements have taken place in literacy abilities, the workplace literacy provider needs to present convincing evidence that the improvements in literacy have led to improvements in job productivity." (p.10)

We refer to this part of Dr. Sticht's article to make a point. If the goal of the National Workplace Literacy Program is "to improve the productivity of the workforce through the improvement of workers' literacy abilities,".then indicators of quality in workplace education programs -- at least those funded through the National Workplace Literacy Program -- must reflect what productivity means to individual programs, unions, companies, and agencies, and to specific industries. If the national indicators are to stand as accurate guide-posts of program quality in workplace education, as they are refined and expanded in years to come, they should reflect the productivity-related and organization-impact goals of workplace education programs.

IV. Evaluation Summaries of Participating Programs

The program summaries describe the work which the teams accomplished during the course of their evaluations. These summaries are contained in the full report.

V. Conclusions: What We Learned about Quality Outcomes and Processes, and the Planning and Evaluation Team Method in Cycle 5

We draw the following conclusions from this evaluation:

Regarding Indicators of Quality for Workplace Education

- Indicators of quality for workplace education programs should be reviewed with critical attention to the organizational context of these programs.

Regarding the Effectiveness of the Planning and Evaluation Team Model

- Evaluation should be an ongoing, integrated function of the program partnership, represented by the planning and evaluation team, and facilitated by, not relegated to, an outside evaluator.

  -- The planning and evaluation team model mirrors the continuous improvement process of the total quality workplace.

  -- Planning and evaluation teams are different from advisory boards and should not be confused with them.

- The planning and evaluation team addresses and ensures program continuation.

- The planning and evaluation team process is not only an evaluation process, but it is also a staff development process which results in unanticipated benefits to the program and host organization.

- Teams which were established before the evaluation, as part of program start-up, had a distinct advantage over other teams.

- Employee participation on the planning and evaluation team is essential and should be increased.

- Each team and each program progresses at its own pace but the evaluation focus should remain on generation of useful data.

- Feedback from the evaluation facilitator is a very important phase in the evaluation process.

- Team members often do not easily distinguish between quality outcomes and processes.

- Creative and generous documentation and measurement is the frontier for the planning and evaluation team.

- The facilitator is an important part of the team.

VI. Recommendations: Improving the Planning and Evaluation Team Model

Based on the conclusions of this evaluation, we make the following recommendations to the MWEI partners. Person(s) who might follow up on the recommendations are identified in parenthesis.

- Require programs to establish planning and evaluation teams during program start-up. (MWEI Partnership)

- Require the participation of four employees on each planning and evaluation team. (MWEI Partnership, MWEI Coordinator, Program Coordinators)

- Establish how well teams accomplish their planning and evaluation work as an essential outcome of an effective workplace education program. (MWEI Partnership)

- Increase the resources available to planning and evaluation teams. They need:
  -- at least four facilitated meetings per team.
  -- a special consultant on creative documentation and measurement to advise teams on the best ways to approach documentation and measurement.
  -- training in the use of the data-base called Statistical Process for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for teams who are ready to use it .
  -- materials generated from the Cycle 5 evaluation, including the quality indicator charts. (MWEI Partnership)

- Develop a job description for the facilitator to clarify his/her roles and tasks. (MWEI Coordinator)

- Begin a mentoring program for new learning provider staff in the MWEI (MWEI Partnership)

- Convene teams regularly (once every quarter) for information sharing. (MWEI Partnership, MWEI Coordinator, Program Coordinators)

  -- Continue to build a data base on all programs in the MWEI with a focus on how they define their quality outcomes and processes. (MWEI Coordinator)

- Involve learning providers more directly in the administration of their grants, especially in cases where Private Industry Councils are the technical administrators. (MWEI Partnership)

- Continue to articulate the philosophical and practical link between planning and evaluation teams as a way to evaluate workplace basic skills programs and continuous improvement strategies that guide the production of quality products. (Team Members, the MWEI Partnership, the MWEI Coordinator, Program Coordinators)

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